



Coast Guard HR Flag Voice 157

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

In the wake of yesterday's terrorist attacks, and the emotional and psychological reactions that many people are already experiencing, it is important that commands are in a position to address concerns that may be expressed by our members. The Coast Guard has a program in place to deal with these types of "Critical Incidents."

What is a Critical Incident?

Simply put, a critical incident is a traumatic event (or perceived life-threatening event) that has sufficient power to overwhelm an individual's ability to cope. Normal physical and psychological responses occur which place considerable pressure upon that person. When the stressor becomes extremely threatening, overwhelming or severe, it often produces a heightened state of cognitive, emotional and behavioral arousal called Traumatic Stress. After having been exposed to traumatic stress directly or indirectly, employees may experience a range of reactions including deterioration of job performance, anxiety states, relationship discord, grief reactions, depression and suicidal ideations. These effects can be immediate, appear later or both.

Examples of Traumatic Events include:

1. Crewmember's death in the line of duty;
2. Children's death or serious injury;
3. Multiple fatalities or seriously injured survivors;
4. Suicide, successful or attempted;
5. Natural disasters;
6. Class A or B mishaps;
7. Use of deadly force;
8. Acts of violence resulting in injury or even death;
9. Acts of terrorism;
10. Grotesque injuries;

11. Observing any traumatic event.

The Coast Guard's Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program provides commands with a tool that can be used to assist those affected by traumatic events so that they can cope with stress effectively.

What is Critical Incident Stress Management?

CISM is an integrated system of interventions designed to prevent and/or mitigate the adverse psychological reactions often accompanying disaster response functions. It was originally designed for public safety, disaster response, military and emergency service personnel. However, today it is used by skilled intervention teams more broadly, including with children.

Through the Coast Guard's CISM program, a command can receive

Command Consultation

Critical Incident Stress Defusing

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

On-scene Support Services

Demobilization

Pre-Incident Training

Family Crisis Intervention

Anniversary Meetings

Follow-up Services

Specific guidance regarding the Coast Guard CISM program is contained in Commandant Instruction 1754.3. A copy of this instruction can be accessed through this web site: http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/g-wk/g-wkw/Comdt/1754_3.PDF

To request CISM services, Commanding Officers and Officers-in-Charge should contact the cognizant Area or District Command Center. The command center in turn contacts the Employee Assistance Program Coordinator (EAPC) assigned to the Work-Life staffs located at each Integrated Support Command or the Headquarters Support Command. The EAPC is responsible for coordinating all CISM activities.

The EAPC will then activate the CISM team to report to the requesting location which consists of: (1) the Team

Coordinator (EAPC), (2) a Mental Health Professional (licensed psychiatrist, psychologist or social worker); (3) a Chaplain; and (4) Peers. Peers performing this role shall have been trained in basic and peer support International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) Courses for CISM.

For any further information on CISM you can contact your Employee Assistance Coordinator (EAPC) by [calling 1-800-872-4957](tel:1-800-872-4957) followed by the extension listed next to these ISC locations: Alameda (252), Boston (301), Cleveland (309), Honolulu (314), Ketchikan (317), Kodiak (563), Miami (307), New Orleans (308), Portsmouth, (305), San Pedro (311), Seattle (313), St. Louis (302), and Washington, DC (932). Discussions of problems with an EAPC are confidential. Additional information on work-life services can be obtained from the Coast Guard Work-Life web site at:

http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/g-wk/g-wkw/worklife/critical_incident_stress_mgmt.htm

Regards, FL Ames



[Flag Voice Contents](#)

This page is maintained by [HR Webmaster \(CG-1A\)](#)